Processing biases towards gain-framed messages may lead reward sensitive individuals to adopt safer driving behaviours

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Using Gray and McNaughton's revised RST, this study investigated the extent to which the Behavioural Approach System (BAS) and the Fight-Flight-Freeze System (FFFS) influence the processing of gain-framed and loss-framed road safety messages and subsequent message acceptance. It was predicted that stronger BAS sensitivity and FFFS sensitivity would be associated with greater processing and acceptance of the gain-framed messages and loss-framed messages, respectively. Young drivers (N = 80, aged 17–25 years) viewed one of four road safety messages and completed a lexical decision task to assess message processing. Both self-report (e.g., Corr-Cooper RST-PQ) and behavioural measures (i.e., CARROT and Q-Task) were used to assess BAS and FFFS traits. Message acceptance was measured via self-report ratings of message effectiveness, behavioural intentions, attitudes and subsequent driving behaviour. The results are discussed in the context of the effect that differences in reward and punishment sensitivities may have on message processing and message acceptance.